DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 687 CS 212 979

AUTHOR Jones, Ginny Pompei
TITLE What Is Our Place? A Survey of the Roles of Lecturers at One University.
PUB DATE Mar 91
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (42nd, Boston, MA, March 21-23, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Educational Research; *Employment Practices; *English Departments; Higher Education; *Nontenured Faculty; Occupational Surveys; Teacher Attitudes; *Teaching Load
IDENTIFIERS *Lecturers; Teacher Surveys; University of North Carolina Wilmington

ABSTRACT

A survey examined the attitudes of lecturers in the English department at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in an attempt to better define the role of the lecturer in the department. Twelve responses were received from 13 full and part-time lecturers. Results indicated that: (1) most favored a committee appointed by the chair using written guidelines to decide on hiring, monitoring, and terminating or converting lecturers; (2) all agreed that teaching should be the chief basis for evaluation; (3) the majority believed that lecturers should not teach a four-course load mainly comprised of composition classes; (4) all agreed that lecturers should continue to have a voice in deciding policy and hiring for tenure-track positions; and (5) 11 favored using written guidelines for hiring and defining job expectations, an orientation, and a mentoring system. Findings suggest that the present political and economic situation has created an underclass--above average in talent, intelligence, and dedication--of people who must lead not only mobile, but nomadic lifestyles and that it will take a concerted effort to unite lecturers and tenure-track faculty to convince administrators that this situation can and must be altered for the benefit of all students and faculty. (The survey instrument is attached.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED335687

What Is Our Place?
A Survey of The Roles of Lecturers At One University

Paper Delivered at Annual Convention
Conference on College Composition and Communication
March 22, 1991

Ginny Pompei Jones
University of North Carolina
at Wilmington

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ginny Pompei Jones

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

CS212979

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

What Is Our Place?

A Survey of the Roles of Lecturers at One University

"Academic stepchildren," "gypsy faculty," "the field hands of academe," and "academic wetbacks," are some of the titles given part-time and temporary faculty by various authors. These are quoted in the NEA's 1989 publications which estimated the scope of this problem to involve approximately 300,000 professionals.

In the spring of 1990, when our acting department chair appointed a committee of four lecturers to study and define our position in the department, we were hopeful that we might have input in determining our future status. We felt we might be defying national trends. We interviewed all the English department lecturers about their concerns and composed the survey I will share with you. This year, with an unprecedented budget crisis, and new administrative influences, our lecturers' report was left incomplete and our hopes have faded. I have the distinct impression that, as of this academic year, our department is following the trend of reducing full-time lectureships to part-time positions and using graduate TA's in the freshman composition program. There is also less participation in departmental decision-making by lecturers. However, I have compiled our survey results and can offer this report in the hope that our work will eventually have some positive results -- if not on our own campus, perhaps elsewhere.

Now for some background information. At least since 1980,

in UNC-Wilmington's English department, full-time lecturers have had one-year contracts, but length of term was undefined. A limit of three years was often informally quoted, but there have been exceptions. One person was retained for thirteen years. In the past, all full-time lecturers, as well as those who carried a four-course load, but were part-time, were given offices, phones and equal access to equipment. This is still true. Funds for travel, merit raises, and even, on two occasions, research release time were given to full-time lecturers. This is no longer true. The Dean now approves travel and release time for tenure-track faculty only. Most of the department's lecturers are active in professional organizations and several have published. We have participated in departmental voting, served on and chaired departmental and university committees, and recently served as mentors of graduate students, as well as advisors to English majors and freshmen in the General College.

As for demographics, the average age of our six current full-time lecturers is 44. We average 15 years of teaching experience, though several of us (notably, the four women) have taught from 15 to 21 years. The average salary is $23,500.

For the most part, our teaching duties have included freshman and basic composition and tutoring in the Writing Place. On occasion, we also teach literature surveys, upper-level technical and creative writing, Writing for Teachers, and other English teacher-education courses. Several lecturers have co-directed the area's Writing Project, and more lecturers than tenure-track faculty have taught Computer-Assisted Composition.

Many also teach evening classes resulting in less-than-desireable schedules.

Additionally, UNC-Wilmington has a ceiling enrollment of 25 students in composition classes, with advanced writing classes of 20, and literature classes of 30. In Freshman Composition we have six core assignments in English 101 and five in English 102 (including two research papers.) We teach the process approach to writing, and student journals and individual conferences are important components of our course requirements.

The lecturers' predicament is not the fault of our Department chairs, all four of whom in my four years at UNC-Wilmington have made commendable efforts on our behalf. However, none of them has been able to implement a policy to make our positions more secure. This type of effort would benefit our students and the Department, and could well serve as a model for other departments and branches of the University. Within the UNC system in the past year, there has been movement toward developing equitable policies concerning lecturers, even in, or perhaps because of, these austere budgetary times. I'll return to these examples later.

As those of you who have copies of our lecturers' survey (see attached survey) can see, we divided our questions into five main areas of concern. We received twelve responses from thirteen lecturers (full and part-time). Last year these thirteen represented nearly a third of the English Department.

In the first category, in terms of "Hiring and Monitoring" of lecturers, most favored a committee appointed by the chair and

using written guidelines to decide on hiring, monitoring, and terminating or converting lecturers. There was an even split on the length of term being prearranged. Some favored a set term, but all thought the best lecturers should be considered for longer terms.

In the area of "Evaluation," all agreed that teaching should be the chief basis for evaluation, almost all recommending written guidelines be used for evaluation on a regular basis. We now have those guidelines. Eleven also thought that, like other faculty, lecturers should be eligible for release time for research. They thought that the following factors should be considered in determining merit pay: advising majors, mentoring, serving on committees, presenting at professional meetings, and performing community service. The majority thought these activities should also be considered in retention decisions. Most additional comments related to the mode of evaluation, recommending peer or faculty observation over strictly student evaluation. These observations are now being done.

Under "Teaching Assignments," the majority thought lecturers should not teach a four-course load mainly comprised of composition classes. They felt a normal teaching load, with other courses (even some upper level), and other responsibilities, such as tutoring or working with the Writing Project, would be more reasonable. Favoring nationally recognized guidelines published by the CCCC's such as a limit of sixty writing students per term, they strongly opposed assignments of four freshman composition classes per term (CCCC's 335)

Fortunately, the limit is now three. A slight majority (seven) thought three preparations should be the maximum, although a few reserved judgment in deference to personal desire or need. Most thought written guidelines for lecturers' loads should be established and followed, but they favored a committee to decide on teaching assignments rather than the department chair alone.

When asked about "Voting and Department Committees," all agreed lecturers should continue to have a voice, as they have in the past, in deciding policy and in hiring for tenure-track positions. A few commented that if they were to be full members of the department, they would be glad to take on full responsibilities, and that their experience and judgment should be valued in choosing colleagues.

In the section on "Part-time Issues," there was much consensus, with eleven out of twelve favoring using written guidelines for hiring and defining job expectations, an orientation, and a mentoring system, and nine favoring some sort of graduated pay scale based upon degrees, experience, and other credentials. Nine also favored a three-preparation limit, and thought training and monitoring should be the same as that of full-time lecturers. There were split opinions on participation in departmental activities other than teaching, but there was a concern for maintaining the quality of the freshman composition program through staff involvement.

As an overview of these results, we should note the respondents' concern for professionalism, fulfilling the needs of the department, and maintaining high teaching standards. For

ourselves, we simply desire some opportunity for professional development, a measure of security, and fair wages and benefits. Several lecturers, including the one with the longest tenure at UNC-W, thought there should be a two or three-tier system, like that at Louisiana State mentioned in Kim Flachman's fall '90 Forum summary, with more rewards, job security, and more responsibilities for senior lecturers (4). Several people emphasized that since for the past few years the lecturer's job has required a 50 to 60-hour work week and a high degree of accountability to students and the department, the pay scale should be closer to that of community college or public school teachers. Personally, I know that my base salary is at least $14,000 per year less than that of my public school colleagues with the same degree and years of experience. It is several thousand dollars less than it would be in community colleges. Granted, we have more professional status and flexibility, but this privilege can hardly be said to balance the lack of security or the sizeable difference in income. And now with a hiring freeze in effect for all state employees except public school teachers, the only alternatives for our dedicated lecturers who want to continue college teaching are to leave the state system or to return to graduate school for a PhD. This latter option does not guarantee future employment, and for many poses insurmountable personal and financial hardship.

The present political situation has created an underclass -- above average in talent, intelligence and dedication -- people who must lead not only mobile, but nomadic lifestyles. We have

no security, often no medical benefits, are often unable to purchase homes and settle in communities. In many states, such as North Carolina, even tenured faculty members' families receive no free tuition benefits, even at the least expensive state schools.

Clearly, those who may be concerned about the pursuit of excellence in undergraduate education in America should be involved in finding a solution to the lecturers' plight. For many undergraduates, Freshman Composition represents their only contact with English departments or writing instruction. It seems eminently sensible to staff these critical courses with the best quality instructors colleges can afford. Such lecturers as those I have profiled are talented teachers who want to work on the undergraduate, and yes, even the freshman level. With their age and experience come the ability to add breadth to students' exposure to types of writing required in the disciplines. In addition, these lecturers free the tenured faculty for research and graduate-level teaching to a great degree. Thus, their positions comprise an economical and high-quality response to current budgetary pressures. Ironically, unless things change for the better, some of us are training graduate students who will soon be our replacements. Freshman composition will more likely than not be a training ground for usually inexperienced Teaching Assistants or part-time staff who cannot be expected to have the level of commitment of full-time employees. This situation has serious implications for the future of composition teaching in general.

Now, what are the alternatives? At UNC-Charlotte this past August, a "one-time emergency" was declared. The English Department cut back on equipment, travel, and supplies rather than cutting any full-time staff. Part-time positions were cut -- those which were perceived to have the least impact on students. Full-time tenure-track and lecturing staff took up the burden, sacrificing release time and teaching larger classes (with the understanding this was a "one-time emergency.") This effort on the part of the lecturers will hopefully be appreciated. They currently have five-year terms of employment. Most lecturers, along with a supportive tenure-track faculty, want this policy to change. They feel it is a waste of training and experience to cut some of its best staff from the department at that point (Anonymous lecturer).

Similarly, at N.C. State University, retention is limited to a five-year term. Forty percent of their English staff consisted of lecturers in the fall of 1989, and 23% of them held PhD's (Blank, Wall, and Smoot 4-5). At that institution, suggested retention options would allow outstanding lecturers to be retained beyond the present five-year limit, possibly creating a "Senior Lecturer" category. The Director of Freshman Composition would cooperate with the Department chair and an Executive committee in making these decisions (9). A number of suggestions have also been made to enfranchise lecturers, to improve their opportunities for communication with colleagues, and to promote a sense of self-worth. Such suggestions include expanding lecturers' opportunities to serve on committees, such as freshman

council and curriculum committees, and even promoting one or more lecturers as assistants to Directors of Freshman Composition to perform part-time administrative and training duties (10). In addition, morale builders such as mentoring by the senior faculty and recognition of departing lecturers have been recommended (10-11).

In conclusion, while the above changes may be implemented, it will take a concerted effort to unite lecturers and tenure-track faculty. We must together convince administrations that this situation can and must be altered for the benefit of all students and faculty.

Works Cited

Anonymous UNC-Charlotte lecturer. Personal interview. 28 January 1991.

Blank, Phil, John Wall, and Jeanne Smoot. "Lecturers Committee Report." (unpublished, North Carolina State University) April 1990.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." College Composition and Communication 40. (October 1989): 329-336.

Flachman, Kim. "A Summary:'Short-term Faculty Members: A National Dilemma and a Local Solution.'" Forum 2 (Fall 1990) 4-5.

Report and Recommendations on Part-time, Temporary & Nontenure Track Faculty. Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1988.

A Survival Handbook for Part-Time & Temporary Faculty. Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1989

Lecturer Survey

So that information can be gathered from lecturers about lectureships in the English Department at ~~UNC-W~~, please respond to the following questions. Submit to Christie by no later than **MAY 2.** Please consider this as input, not policy setting.

Hiring and Monitoring Lectureships	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Should a departmental committee be responsible for hiring, monitoring, terminating, and/or converting lecturer positions?.....					
2. Should members of a lecturer committee be appointed by the English Department chair?.....					
3. Should members of a lecturer committee be elected by the English Department?.....					
4. Should there be guidelines in writing regarding the hiring, converting, and terminating of lecturers?..					
5. Should all lecturers be hired for a specific time period?.....					
6. Should any lecturers be considered beyond a specific time period?.....					

If you could suggest guidelines, what would you suggest (i.e., advertising for lectureships, qualifications, experience, pay scale, etc.)?

YOUR COMMENTS:

Evaluation of Full-Time Lecturers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. Should full-time lecturers be evaluated on their teaching?.....					
8. Should full-time lecturers be expected to do research?.....					
9. Should full-time lecturers be eligible for release time for research?..					
10. Should full-time lecturers be expected to advise majors?.....					
11. Should full-time lecturers be expected to mentor graduate assistants?..					
12. Should full-time lecturers serve on department or university committees?.....					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
13. Should full-time lecturers be expected to make presentations at professional meetings?.....					
14. Should full-time lecturers be expected to do community service?.....					
15. Should the above items be considered for retention?.....					
16. Should the above items be considered for merit pay?.....					
17. Should there be guidelines in writing regarding the evaluation of lecturers?.....					
18. Should full-time lecturers be evaluated on a regular basis?.....					

If you could suggest guidelines regarding the evaluation of full-time lecturers, what would you suggest?

YOUR COMMENTS:

Teaching Assignments For Full-Time Lecturers	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. Should all full-time lecturers teach four courses?.....					
20. Should full-time lecturers have the opportunity to teach courses other than Composition 100, 101, and 102?...					
21. Should three preparations be the maximum?.....					
22. Should the chair determine course loads for all lecturers?.....					
23. Should a committee determine course loads for all lecturers?.....					
24. Should there be guidelines in writing regarding teaching assignments for lecturers?.....					
25. Should other options besides teaching specific classes be considered for lecturers (i.e., Writing Place, Success Program, Research Option)?....					

If you could suggest guidelines for teaching assignments, what would you suggest?

YOUR COMMENTS:

Voting and Department Committees	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. Should full-time lecturers have a voice on policy?.....					
27. Should full-time lecturers have a voice on curriculum matters?.....					
28. Should full-time lecturers have a voice on hiring of tenure-track positions?.....					

If you could suggest guidelines regarding voting and departmental committees, what would you suggest?

YOUR COMMENTS:

Part-Time Issues	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
29. Should there be guidelines in writing regarding part-time positions?.....					
30. Should a specific mentor system be implemented to help the new lecturers?					
31. Should there be a special orientation for new lecturers?.....					
32. Should part-time lecturers be required to take part in any departmental activities other than teaching?.....					
33. Should the pay scale be graduated based upon degrees, experience, credentials?.....					
34. Should part-time lecturers have a voice on policy?.....					
35. Should part-time lecturers have a voice on curriculum matters?.....					
36. Should three preparations be the maximum for teaching assignments?.....					
37. Should training and monitoring be any different from that used for full-time lecturers?.....					

If you could suggest guidelines regarding part-time lecturers, what would you suggest?

YOUR COMMENTS: